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VIDEO GAMES LOCALISATION

LOKALIZACE VIDEOHER

BACHELOR'S THESIS

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Cílem práce je analýza procesu lokalizace videoher. Na základě prostudované literatury se práce zaměří na fakt jak přizpůsobit software a produkt (videohru) odlišné kultuře a jazyku, jak zavádět novou terminologii a jak překládat/lokalizovat nové pojmy.

DOPORUČENÁ LITERATURA:

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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá historií a problematikou lokalizace videoher. Práce se skládá ze dvou částí. První je teorie, která bude obsahovat počátek počítačových her až po přítomné videohry. Zároveň se bude zabývat lokalizací a problémy, které okolo ní jsou. Bude obsahovat termíny, které doprovází lokalizaci videoher jako jsou například transkreace, internacionalizace, uživatelské rozhraní, herní kód a spoustu dalších. Ukáže důležitost, proč by si měly společnosti dávat pozor na odlišnosti v kulturách a jaké mohou být následky. Druhá polovina se bude skládat z praktické části, kde se budou porovnávat různé hry a jejich způsob lokalizace.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Videohry, lokalizace, internacionalizace, transkreace, jazyk, překlad

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis deals with the history and issues of Video Games Localization. The work will consist of two parts. The first is Theory which will include the origins of the first games to present video games. Also, it will deal with localization and problems around it. There will be terms that surrounds localization of video games like transcreation, internationalization, user interface, game code a so on. It will show the importance of why companies should be aware of cultural differences and what consequences could follow. The second half will consist of practical part where given games will be compared to the style of localization.

KEYWORDS

Videogames, localization, internationalization, transcreation, language, translation

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V Brně dne: **28. května 2019**

.....
Tomáš Novotný, podpis

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Introduction

Video games became integral part of modern world. Not only it became the source of entertainment but also a source of self-improvement. When video games first came it was a futuristic blast. First games were played on tables in taverns, at homes or with friends. But then came first computers and with them computer games. It was only for entertainment purposes, but it has become popular in matter of months. First it seemed that playing video games was a waste of precious time, at least that is what most people think but as they extended throughout the world, they also became a source of creativity. Many people who played first games on computers wanted to try to make their own games with the use of modern technology and that is what adds to their fantasy and creativity. It is the same as with drawing, filming a movie or writing a book. The only difference is the format. Addiction has become reality to video game players but that is only a mirage because reading a book, writing a story, making your own movie may also become one's addiction. Some may see reading books as educational purpose but even if people like it or not, the same goes for video games. Most of the games are story-driven and that means a lot of text and sometimes the games are set in medieval times when developers try to stay as accurate as possible.

Over the years, video games became even more advanced with the upgrade of graphics and rise of new motherboards, ROMs/RAMs, graphic cards, et cetera. Games came with cutscenes, dialogues created in a single language which was English. As videogames were spread around the world, the localization phase was about to begin. That is where the original game language was to be extended to other languages like German, Polish, Russian and even Czech. This bachelor's thesis will be about games first video games to present video games. There will be theory about localization and what it means and why it is necessary. The practical part will dive deep into examination of various games from the twenty-first century.

1 The History of Videogames

The first video games appeared with the coming of first computers. In comparison to present computers, the first computers were big enough to fill a small room and were overpriced that only Universities and rich companies could afford them. They started as an oscilloscope screen games with Tennis for Two by William Higinbotham. Then the first game console was created by developers at Sanders Associates in 1972. Later came a game console remembered by everyone called Atari. This was the next breakthrough for video games. It came with a joystick and first cartridges (History.com Editors, 2017).

Later, the game industry in North America got a fatal blow when many companies fell into bankruptcy and the development of video games has been stopped for several years. That was, until Nintendo game console NES came to the market and the restoration began. Nintendo became one of the game console giants with their exclusive games like Legend of Zelda, Metroid, Super Mario, et cetera. To avoid future problems, Nintendo decided to set rules for the third-party developers that wanted to make games for Nintendo NES, therefore the companies would take their time and not rush their products (History.com Editors, 2017).

Around 1990, SEGA came with their mascot Sonic the Hedgehog to compete against Nintendo's Super Mario but failed considerably. The tension between two companies escalated with new release of SEGA's Genesis console and later on with Super NES by Nintendo. The games were simple and two dimensional at the time (History.com Editors, 2017).

As technology rose, the new dimension began to open for game consoles with coming of first PlayStation and then PlayStation 2 from company SONY. The first game console that used DVD's. Nintendo and SEGA were not far behind with their Nintendo GameCube and SEGA Dreamcast (History.com Editors, 2017).

As time passed, the game consoles entered age where graphics took new heights with PlayStation 3 by Sony and Xbox 360 by Microsoft. Nintendo looked as it took step back with their Nintendo Wii, because graphics were lacking but the innovation of motion control did not leave them behind (History.com Editors, 2017).

In the present, SONY, Microsoft and Nintendo remain games and game console giants, with their new consoles PlayStation 4, Xbox One and Nintendo Switch at the top. But computers were not behind as their graphics and motherboards far surpassed the abilities of present game

consoles. People like to pretend that computers are game consoles as well and argue which console is better (History.com Editors, 2017).

2 Video Games Genres

Video games are divided into many genres just like movies only for exception for few genres that are unique to video games. Genres are commonly from action, adventure, sport to RPG and MMORPG games.

2.1 RPG

RPG is an abbreviation for Role Playing Game, where the player gets a chance to create his own character or the gamer plays as a character by set by the developers. The difference from other genres is that the player can chose the behavior of his character, the way he answers in conversations or what stats the player wants to chose for his character. RPG games became even more popular nowadays and companies like BioWare, Bethesda keeps creating new story driven role-playing games.

2.2 MMORPG

MMORPG is almost same as normal RPG with a difference that the game is played connected to the internet with other players. The abbreviation is Massive Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game where people from real world can talk to each other in virtual world, fight and enjoy the game together. Most of the known MMORPG games are Elder's Scrolls Online and Tera, Guild Wars 2, Final Fantasy XIV, et cetera.

2.3 Action

Type of games where the player needs to have fast reflexes and sometimes quick thinking. Most of the time the action games are compared to Shooter Games. Action game involves challenges played against an enemy. Most common games are Fortnite, Counter-Strike, Grand Theft Auto, Left 4 Dead, et cetera.

2.4 Strategy

Strategy games most of the time require quick thinking with deep concentration. In these games, players take control over army or characters and build their own empire or fight against enemies. Strategy games can be divided into Simple Strategy Games or Real-Time Strategy Games. The real-time strategy games are played in real-time against real-life players or computer. Some strategy games might be played as turn taking game. Well known Strategy games are StarCraft, Warcraft III, Age of Empires, et cetera.

2.5 First Person Shooters (FPS)

Common type of action video games where the gamer sees through characters eyes and shoots and kills his enemies. Most of the time, the player cannot see how the played character looks. FPS games are following: Call of Duty, Battlefield, ARMA, Crysis, Counter-Strike, et cetera.

2.6 Sport

In sports games, players can experience real world sports like a football, basketball, tennis and many other sports. Games are most of the time seen from above, where player watches or controls the characters. Famous sport games are FIFA, NHL, Wii Sport, NBA, et cetera.

2.7 Adventure

Adventure games tend to be single player games where the player must solve puzzles and mysteries to pass through the game. Player can choose or has a given character. There is a story which has set goal from the start. Adventure games are following: Myst, Syberia, The Neverhood, Super Mario, The Legend of Zelda and many more.

3 Internationalization

In the past, when the first video games came to the light, the localization of games was still at its early beginnings. But after a decade, games became even more popular which was the cause of international releases. More countries involved, the better sales and more money gained for the developers. That is when it came to the localization of video games. For players to enjoy the game to the fullest, adding more language options was necessary. Most of the games are released in the original language, English and that does not necessary mean that the targeted player can speak English, less understand it. Because of that, developers hire people in selected countries to transform the English language into their own. But nothing is as easy as it seems, since English and other languages may differ not just in the length of the text, but also in the length of the spoken sentence. Therefore, to prevent future problems, the developer has to first Internationalize the base game (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 4).

3.1 Base Game Code

It is important for the targeted audience to feel like the game was created for them. It means that the game should be adaptable to any language. For instance, if a player from a different speaking country sees a User Interface, or UI in short, with overlapping text, or even worse, missing signs, then that could cause the company a negative feedback. To avoid this problem, the Base Game Code, which is the first Code created at the beginning of development, should be already prepared for the Localization to other countries. That would include programming the Base Game Code, so it would already support a UNICODE which is not as limited as ASCII table (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 5).

ASCII is an abbreviation for an American Standard Code which shows only 256 characters, so it does not include accented or other foreign characters ("ASCII Table and Description," n.d.).

Meanwhile the UNICODE can show over 65 000 characters. This procedure can save a lot of time and effort (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 5).

3.2 User Interface

As mentioned above, the UI is a major part of the game. It displays a lot of information like health, stamina, map, quests and other important information. If a gamer sees a text which has

a missing letter, or the text is overlapping, or there is even a mission and a player cannot clearly read what it wants him/her to do, then that can destroy the overall feeling for the game. One of the ways how to avoid this is the use of icons. Generally, the translated text is few times longer than the original language. As an example may serve the English word 'Health'. In Czech, the word 'Health' can be translated as 'Zdraví' which has a letter less and can fill the bar with ease. But if we look at the German translation, it is 'Gesundheit'. This word would overlap the bar or the box and create an UI which could aggravate the German player and he would not find the game as satisfactory as players in the original country. One of the ways could be to make the word smaller, but that would look fake and as a late addition. That is why the icon for a Heart would make a better companion and it is known for everyone. Another word that could be problematic is a word 'EXIT'. This word is known everywhere around the world. There should be no translation since it would mean in Czech, 'Východ' and filling the word into the button or the box would result in overlapping. The developers should be careful of which icons they use since some icons might mean something different in other cultures (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 5).

3.3 Displayed Text – Part 1

The meaning of each word could be lost, if the text is truncated to fill into the boxes, columns and other parts of the UI. A game for a computer on client Steam, DOTA 2, might serve as an good example. (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 5).

DOTA 2 is an online multiplayer battle arena video game which already won few awards since it is known all around the world and millions of players are playing it, even making living out of it. The game itself was taken in as a sport and hundreds of players are battling against each other in order to win a tournament that is set in few selected countries. The stage where the battle takes place is divided into three 'lanes'. Those are Top lane, Middle lane and Bottom lane. In short, they are written as Top, Mid and Bot. For a complete beginner, those names could be confusing since Top can mean for the player, the Top gamer. Mid could be taken as middle but with Bot, some may have few problems. Bots are also known as characters played by the AI (Artificial Intelligence). There to avoid confusion, these words should be written in full meaning, so the player would realize that Top could mean the top of the map, the Mid the middle and Bot, the bottom of the map.

The developers should plan looking back at their targeted audience and think of solution beforehand. That way, they can avoid future confusion. But this example is only a small problem. There are games that have truncated text which completely changes the true meaning. (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 5-6).

3.4 Displayed Text – Part 2

The accented characters possess another problem. Latin-based characters and diacritics are not present in ASCII table. If the American Standard Code will be used in European localization, then that would result in words like 'Žiravina' which is a Czech word for 'Corrosive' in English and instead of the word with diacritics, the player would get either '@iravina' or even worse 'iravina'. The result might be that the letter might not even be there. Prevention for such occasion is the UNICODE which has over 65 000 characters, including Asian signs and all sorts of accented characters (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 6).

3.5 Redoing

The American Game is successful in the origin country and a developer wants to expand it into Europe. But to do so successfully, they have to redo Base Game Code and include the UNICODE and replace the ASCII Table. That can cost developer more money, time and resources. Again, to avoid this, it is better to include the UNICODE right from the start, because to test the correctness of letters, the testing must take place. Another time and money wasted on what could have been dealt with at the beginning of the creation of a Game Code. It is good to think ahead and take care of the problem from the start. (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 8).

3.6 PAL and NTSC

There is a difference when creating a console game for America or Europe. Not only in text encoding but also a difference in video standards. European video standard PAL (Phase Alternating Line) brings 576 horizontal lines at frame rate of 25fps (frames per second). Meanwhile the American video standard NTSC (National Television System Committee) brings 525 horizontal lines at framerate of 30 fps ("Video Learning Guide for Flash," 2011).

If a video game was meant for PAL monitors and would appear on NTSC monitors, it would cause the screen to have black bars since the PAL video standard has about 50 horizontal lines more. Meanwhile if the game was meant for NTSC monitors and would be played on PAL

monitors, then the image would result in flickering since the PAL has more lines but less frame rate per second (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 7).

If people look closely on the Packaging of the game, they can see the video standard to be either PAL or NTSC version. There might be a situation when an NTSC game would appear in PAL markets, which is a result of error in distribution and should be taken care of immediately before resulting in a negative feedback.

3.7 Cultural Context

It is important to watch out for cultural context since every culture is different. For an example the difference in European and American dates. Europeans use the formation of a day, a month and a year. Meanwhile the Americans use formation of a month, a day and a year. A lot of famous video games companies are set in America like Electronic Arts, Valve Corporation, Rockstar Games, Activision Blizzard, so it is important to implement the compatibility of European dates in pre-production state to avoid future problems (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 7).

Celebrities, musicians, artists, moderators are different in every country. Some are known around the world, some are known only in a set region. When it comes to the story, sometimes to make a reference, story writers decide to put in a person as an example. It might not seem as a big problem but if a person from a different country hears it or reads it, he or she might not understand why is that person mentioned there. What is the true meaning? This issue can be taken care of in a process of localization when teams can change the name of the person mentioned and take their known characters, close to the original reference. This way the true meaning of the reference can be saved.

But it is better for the game to be culturally neutral to avoid confusion among the players.

3.8 The Overview of Internationalization

Internationalization is the first phase to overall victory of Game Localization. If a game is at the beginning taken as international product, then creating a *Base Game Code* that includes necessary tables with characters and diacritics supporting all languages is the first step.

Then the creation of *User Interface* (UI) that must be user-friendly to the targeted audience. If it includes icons instead of words that could be translated into longer words and that do not possess double meaning or words like 'EXIT' that is known worldwide, then it could bring

trouble. If there is no overlapping or truncated text which could result in loss of true meaning, then the second step is also completed.

The same must be done with *Cultural Context*.

If the Displayed Video Standard is solved at the beginning with PAL and NTSC in mind, then the third and final step to Internationalization is complete.

Next issue will be addressed in the second phase, in the next chapter which will dive deeper into Localization of Video Games.

4 Localization

It is the second phase to overall success of Video Game Localization. It is a process where the original language is translated into other languages. That means if the game is originally made in the USA and a developer wants to expand it overseas to other countries, speaking different languages, they must localize the game. Localization of a game can be cheap or expensive, depending on the steps taken beforehand.

There are few types of localization and it depends on a company what path they will chose. But more money and more effort they put into localization, the more it will turn out in sales. There is a higher possibility that gamers will buy a game which is localized into their native language. If it is available only in the original language, the foreign players might not concern buying it and it would end up in risk of the loss of investment and sales. To prevent this from happening, the developer should think ahead and take precautions. One of them would be the implementation of UNICODE into *Base Game Code*. (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 8).

4.1 No localization

One of the localizations is no localization at all. Depending on the company, on budget and other important variables, they decide whatever they leave the game in an original language or translate it into other. This is mostly done by small companies that do not have enough money to translate the game to other languages and decides that they will leave it in its original language. This way they can save money and time, but they also undergo a risk that the game will not sell well in other countries, if they decide to sell it worldwide. But there is a chance that the result will be otherwise. (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 8-9).

4.2 Translation of Packaging and Manual

One of low-risk methods is the translation of packaging and manual. This method is done usually by companies that do not believe that the game will sell well in specific region. But there is still possibility that gamers will buy it and play it, resulting in at least small income. (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 9).

This kind of localization can be found in the Czech Republic on trademark of Nintendo games. Nintendo as one of the consoles and game giants, next to Sony and Microsoft, known

worldwide, is one of the most recognizable trademarks. But in the Czech Republic, Nintendo did not make enough breakthrough so the number of sold consoles and games was very low, resulting in only Packaging and Manual localization.

Said to be one of the low-risk methods, but as for the perspective of a player, a gamer does not get as immersive experience in the game as if it would have been translated at least partially. Packaging and manual include summary of the story, controls and information so the player would not be completely lost but also will not experience the full joy of the game's full potential. (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p.9).

4.3 Full Localization

One of the most expensive localizations. Full localization includes voiceover, translated text, packaging and manual of the targeted language. The work of localization is a time taking process which is given to a smaller group within the development branch. Most of the time it is done by a team that lives in the selected country with a native language. Full localization is expensive and risky and is only done by a company with a high budget since there is a chance that the game will not be popular in selected region. But the fruits of labour will be rewarded since the gamer who plays the game in his/her native language can enjoy the product to its fullest and get immersed in the world with no limits (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 10).

Full localization is like a double-edged sword, it can be advantageous and disadvantageous at the same time as it can bring either riches or bankruptcy.

4.4 Partial Localization

This could be thought of as a golden mean for localization since developers will save half of money then continuing with voiceovers which demands actors, translation of dialogues so they fit for the mouth movement also known as lip-sync, et cetera. Partial localization takes care only of translation and adjustment of the text inside the game. There is also a possibility of localization of packaging and manual with it. (Maxwell Chandler and O'Malley Deming 2011, p. 9-10).

4.5 Partial Localization - Example

This is done most of the time in Czech Republic. A decade ago, Czech companies that were given the task to do localization, tried doing even the voiceover for games like Rayman 3, Prince of Persia and so on. The reason were the children. The games were meant for them and to enjoy the story, the full localization was necessary. In the end the Czech translators found

out that it is not as easy as it seemed. Translating the text was not hard but the challenge lied in lip-sync since English and Czech languages use different set of sentences. There could be found sequences where the Czech spoken text is shortened or sometimes not present at all. Another few games continued with Full Localization but that ended few years back as the Partial Localization seemed as an easier and better idea.

4.6 Transcreation

Translation can not only be about translating a text into different language, but it can also be used as creativity and that is Transcreation. When it comes to translation, most of the original names or titles stay the same without a single change, but there are times where the translating team can make a difference, they can be creative. A creativity where they will take the original name and change it in a new unique and meaningful way. Here we have the perfect example of transcreation and that can be found in the Spanish version of animated TV series Flintstones. Spanish took the translation into a whole new level, where they renamed the original Fred Flintstone to Pedro Picapiedra. They maintained the original meaning of the stone (piedra) and used their advantage of phoneme /p/, creating original name with the close meaning. (Bernal-Merino, 2013, p. 143-144)

4.7 The Overview of Localization

Not only the game takes time to make, but the localization is whole different story. It is a challenge on its own. But that belongs to the problematics of making a video game. If the developer wants to make a good game worth for others to buy, they must take a risk and give it their all. At least Partially. Localization is best suited for companies that have bigger budget and less risk to go bankrupt.

Game Localization is like a double-edged sword but if the localization is done well and the game is popular then the companies can make a lot of money. And if the game is a success then there is possibility for a next successor.

There are four ways of localization of a game. First is *No Localization*, where the game stays in its original state but with a chance that if it gets to a different language speaking country then there is a chance that the gamers will not buy it. But it is said to be one of low risk and cheap methods of creating a game.

Second is the translation of *Packaging and Manual* which is a another low risk and cheap method, and can be sold in different language countries, but that the player will only understand the story from what is written in the manual and on the packaging. This might not

let them immerse in the game completely but if the game is sympathetic to them, they will be happy to play the original with at least small knowledge of what is happening in the story and the game itself.

The mid-way is the *Partial Localization* which bears a medium risk if the game is not successful, but it will attach to hearts of many players since the game feels closer to them.

And the most expensive and with a high risk is the *Full Localization*. It includes a full translation of the game with voiceovers, text, packaging and manual altogether. If the game is not successful, then the company might bankrupt but if it is successful then it is a win for them.

5 Research of Localization: No Localization

5.1 Nintendo

No localization is a real issue in the Czech Republic. But it is not because of laziness of developers or because of time pressure. As it was mentioned in theoretical part, the localization is not cheap. It might be expensive if in the given region, where the game will be released as well, will not sell well enough. That might be because of the Brand is not as popular as in other countries. For example, the company Nintendo in the Czech Republic. Nintendo is known for its franchise of Super Mario, The Legend of Zelda, Metroid. But as it seems in the graphs from the company Sony in the Czech Republic, where they asked to make a research of the income of consoles and games, the only brands that make most profit are Sony and Microsoft (Čuchna, 2015). Meanwhile Nintendo consoles are far behind. But that does not mean that Nintendo will never make any breakthrough in the Czech Republic in the future. That is why they went for the cheapest way and brought their games in a simple localization, No Localization. Here are two examples from Czech stores that the Packaging nor Manuals are translated. First is The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess for Nintendo Wii from year 2006. The second game is The Legend of Zelda: The Breath of the Wild, released for Nintendo Wii U and Nintendo Switch in 2017. Both games with differences of eleven years and no change in localization. Not even Partial nor Packaging and Manual localization. Maybe one of the reasons why Nintendo does not make any huge breakthrough in Czechia.



Pic.5.1.1 Packaging for The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess (Wii) and The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild (Wii U)

Another reason is the ability of Czechs to speak English or even understand it. Unlike in 2012 where the ability was 11.07% for Czechs to understand English on normal scale, now rose even higher with a new research done in 2018.(Černá, 2012) So from those numbers can be seen that the reason for low breakthrough of Nintendo games is thanks to the ability of understanding English enough to enjoy the game and the story to the full. (-rkp, 2018)

Another reason can be the genres. Most of the games are similar to Japanese culture games. No wonder since Nintendo main headquarters is set in Japan.

5.2 Dragon Ball Series

Dragon Ball series started over thirty years ago with the first manga released by Akira Toriyama in 1984. From that time, the Dragon Ball series went a long road and became popular all over the world. Two years later, the series has been animated and it got its release all over the world with adaptation to other languages. The ones that are used nowadays are Japanese and American English. The popularity grew larger with release of first Dragon Ball games in 1986 for Super Cassette Vision, called Dragon Ball: Dragon Daihikyō till the newest release in 2018, Dragon Ball: Legends for mobile devices.

As the series became popular, one of the places where it went around was the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The series has been released in the countries around, like Austria, Germany, Poland, et cetera, but left a big hole in Czechia. Although the Dragon Ball Series is unknown to Czechs, the developing company Bandai Namco still releases the game in the Czech Republic, but only in version of No Localization. That way they will not lose money and still make some profit. But is it really that bad? Few Czech Dragon Ball Fan Sites with many fans exist, so at least small profit can be made.

There can be found many reasons why there is No Localization, beginning from the low expectations of profit in selected region to no knowledge of the brand. Either way, it brings at least a small closure for the fans of the game series, leaving them to learn English to the greater heights and experiencing foreign games at their homes without need for importation from other regions.

6 Research of Localization: Packaging and Manuals

6.1 *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*

Ever since the start of localization of video games in the Czech Republic, the Packaging and Manual localization went through several changes. This subchapter will show examples of three different types packaging and manuals that will show the box arts from early 2000 to 2018. All three box arts are from the same publisher Ubisoft.

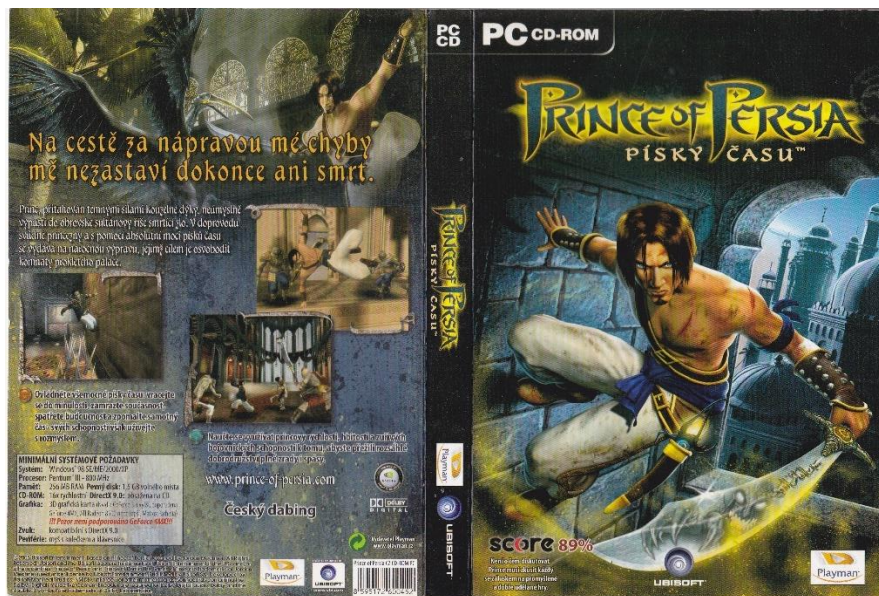
The first is the box art for Ubisoft series Prince of Persia which received a trilogy called The Sands of Time Trilogy. The first game was Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time. Here is a comparison of the original Packaging to Czech box art. There will be also comparison between two regions, PAL and NTSC.

The first box art is for Playstation 2 version. This cover is retail cover for PAL region. As cover for PAL and Czech are compared, there is clear evidence, that they are both identical. The only differences are the translation and minimal requirements for running the game. The other difference may be found in the translation of the first text: “In My Quest for redemption, not even My Death can Stop Me.” Which was translated as: “Na cestě za nápravou mé chyby mě nezastaví ani smrt.” There is possibility that translators were doing so called ‘Blind Translation’ or decided not to translate the text literally. The meaning of Death in the Sands of Time trilogy is tricky, because the main character, Prince, can control time thanks to the Dagger of Time or Amulet. Therefore, the Prince can overcome the Death itself. It is then possible, that the translation for the Czech Packaging could be: “...mě nezastaví ani má smrt.” Every time Prince dies, he can rewind time so he escapes his ‘Own Death.’ But both versions are good since in Czech translation, the literal translation is sometimes no good at all.



Pic.6.1.1.: PAL version of The Sands of Time

(http://www.thecoverproject.net/view.php?game_id=3240)



Pic. 6.1.2.: Czech version of The Sands of Time

The reason for Czech version and PAL version to be the same is because the Czech Republic belongs to Europe, which belongs to the PAL region. But if PAL and NTSC versions are compared, there are huge difference in the art of packaging. The pictures used, the text. The text might be because of different culture. As it is most known, America tends to dramatize the story by introducing the heroes and villains. If looked on both box arts, in the NTSC version, the story of the game is told by the main character. Already mentioning the main villain, Vizier for dramatic purposes. Meanwhile when looking on the PAL version, the story

of Prince is told by the narrator and there is no trace of the main villain. Only that the Prince was seduced by the power of dagger, unleashed a doom and the quest of the game without giving over-informative description. Next difference is in the first big text with the first part remaining the same, but in the second part of the text in NTSC version, there is used: “I Must Control Time Itself.”



Pic 6.1.3. NTSC Version of The Sands of Time

(http://www.thecoverproject.net/view.php?cover_id=4641)

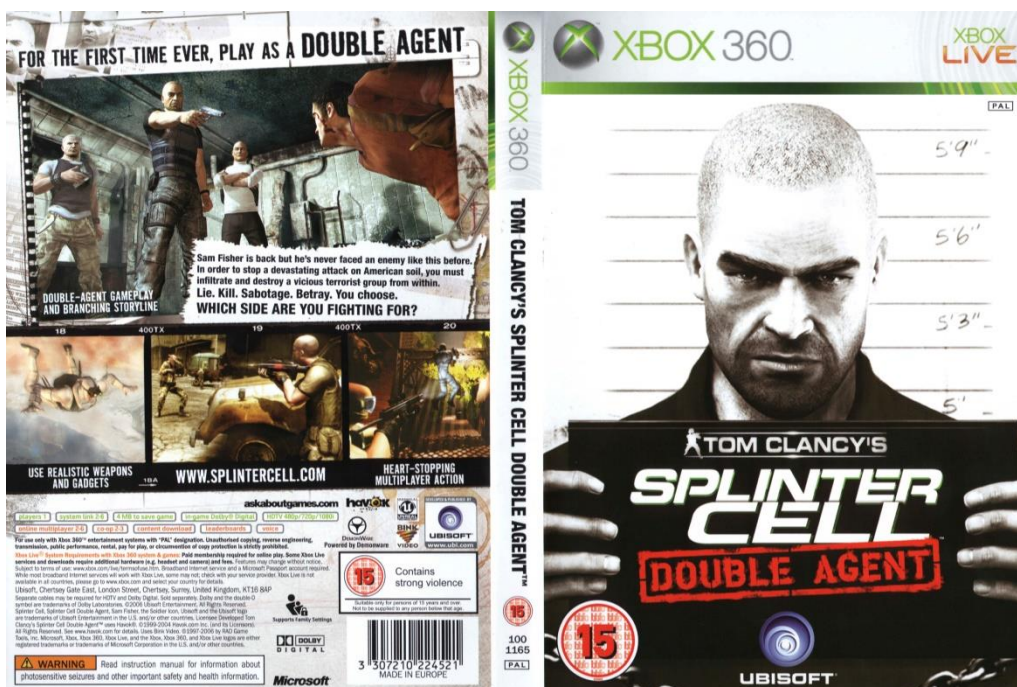
The Sands of Time was released in 2003 and a year later, Prince of Persia: Warrior Within, the sequel was release. The difference between the Czech box art for both of the games can be seen, that The Sands of Time was translated as :”Píský času,” but the second game’s name remained Warrior Within. There existed one version where the sub name of the game was written as:”Válečník,” which was a shorter expression of “Warrior Within.” The reasons for not translating the text literally into: “Válečník uvnitř“ are unknown and might have been the decision of the translator. The same was done with the third installment, Prince of Persia: Two Thrones where the sub name of the game was not translated as well.



Pic.6.1.4.: Comparison of All Three Czech Box Arts for Prince of Persia Trilogy

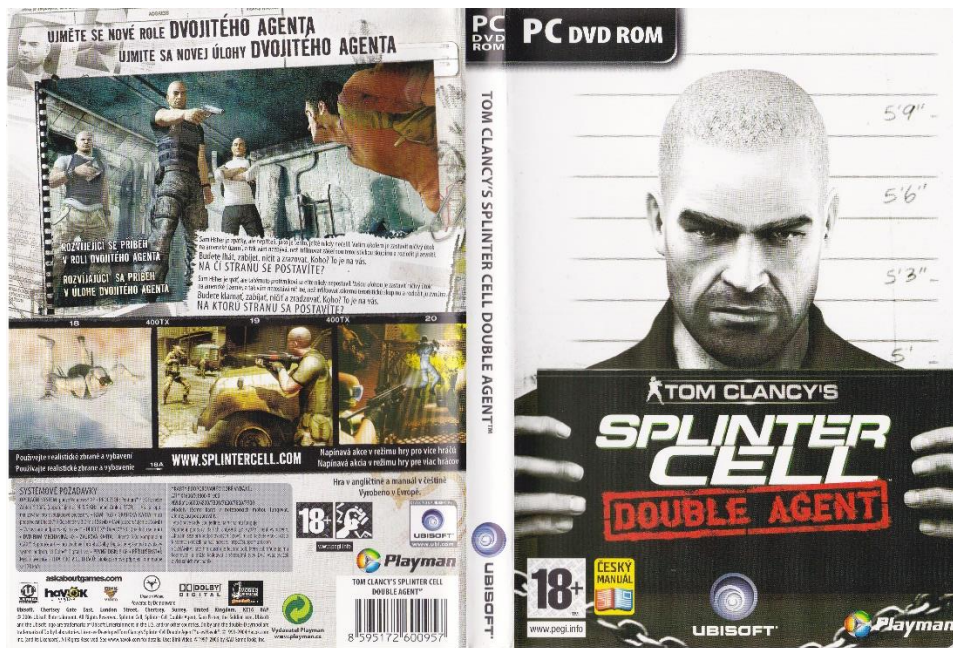
6.2 Splinter Cell: Double Agent

The next chosen box art for comparison belongs to another Ubisoft franchise, Splinter Cell. The specific game is called Splinter Cell: Double Agent. The fourth game from the series, where the main character, Sam Fisher, Agent of Third Echelon is forced into work of a Double Agent. Again, a comparison of three box arts will be introduced. The first two box art belong from the same PAL region. In the first picture, we have the English version of the packaging. In the second we have Czech version of the box art. The style in which it was made is the same, pictures, text, only with small difference. The Czech version also includes the text in Slovak language. The text has been made smaller for both languages to fit.



Pic.6.2.1.: PAL Version of Double Agent

(http://www.thecoverproject.net/view.php?cover_id=1748)



Pic.6.2.2.: Czech Version of Double Agent



Pic.6.2.3.: NTSC Version of Double Agent

(http://www.thecoverproject.net/view.php?cover_id=1747)

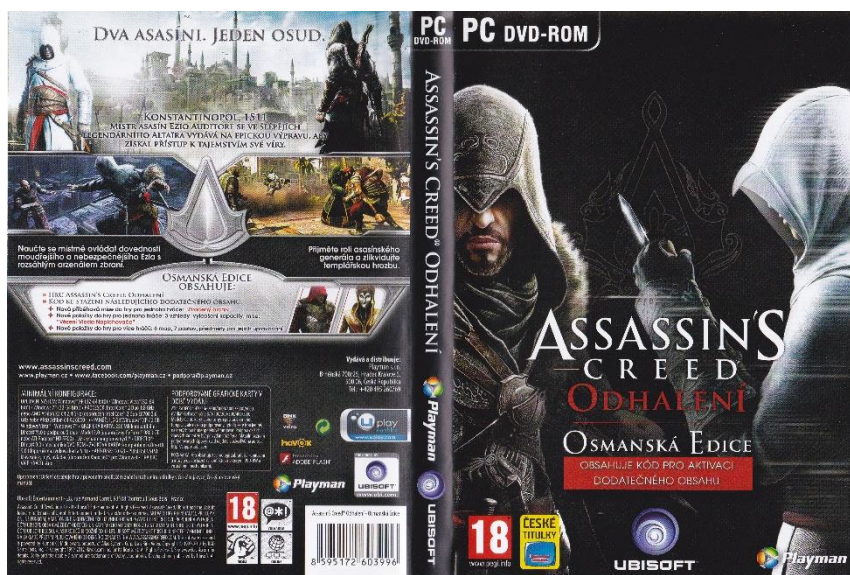
On the third picture we have the Packaging for NTSC version of the game, America version. There again can be found big differences. Few changes have been made in the pictured used on the backside of the case, but otherwise remains the same. What changed was the text used. Again, this can be part of differential cultural preferences same as with Prince of Persia. The

text in PAL version seems more informative, neutral. Only showing small aspects of the game, meanwhile the NTSC version aims for more dramatic impact by pointing at the first text which tells about the game that it is popular and highly anticipated. The second part again dramatizes the text by giving a hardcore action that awaits in the game.

Other differences are met right at the front side of the case. PAL version keeps it neutral with white background, the main character and the name of the game, pointing slowly at the story to be unfold. But with the NTSC version, the black background was added with two pictures of the main character. First picture is the same as is in the PAL version, but the second shows Sam Fisher as he walks away from an exploding car, adding action to the packaging.

6.3 Assassin's Creed

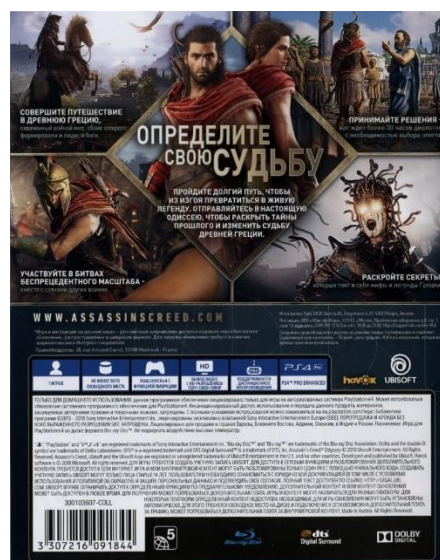
This part will consist of only two box arts for comparison and those are Assassin's Creed: Revelations or in Czech: "Odhalení", and Assassin's Creed: Odyssey. As the Odyssey will be dismantled in next chapter, here will be only comparison to the style or what has changed in the type of design of box art. The first picture is the art of packaging for Czech version of Assassin's Creed: Revelations. Since both PAL and Czech version are the same except different languages. As it is seen, the back case of the packaging contains pictures, and each contain a text with information about game's gameplay. And because it is a Special Edition, it also contains information about bonus downloadable contents. This box art was from 2012.



Pic.6.3.1.: Packaging for Czech Version of AC: Revelations



Pic.6.3.2.: Packaging for Czech Version of AC: Odyssey



Pic. 6.3.3.: Packaging for Russian Version of AC: Odyssey

(<https://www.mobygames.com/game/assassins-creed-odyssey/cover-art/gameCoverId,533330/>)

Now if people look on the second box art to the game Assassin's Creed: Odyssey, we can see a decrease in quality of the packaging. For this comparison, the available cover was for the Russia version of the game. But it still clearly shows how the quality of box art for games in the Czech Republic has gone south. Both arts contain same pictures that were used in the game, but the difference is the presence of text. The center remains the same: "CHOOSE YOUR FATE" translated into given languages, but text to other pictures in the Czech version is missing. What's more, the Russia version contains text in single language, meanwhile the Czech takes more languages together. Slovak language was intercepted in the depiction of

Splinter Cell: Double Agent cover. But there are two more languages, Hungarian and Polish. The same can be seen for other games as well. Which brings us to the question, why? Why is the quality of Czech game covers decreasing over the years? One of the reasons might be the height of Czech language, not to mention, Slovak, Poland, Hungarian, et cetera. Since these languages are on most part translated Partially, the publishers might take an easier way to success by giving lower quality translations of covers. At least another closure for the players in the given country may be that they at least get to play the game in their language in a form of subtitles and translated interface.

What can be added as a nice bonus to the cover of Odyssey is a flipping cover. A special bonus for the players, since they can decide between two playable characters.

In the next chapter, there will be a quick look on games with Partial and Full localizations.

6.4 Manuals

Not just Packaging have fallen a bit, but also manuals. Manuals for the games tended to be at least ten pages long of a single language information. For examples the use of manual from Ubisoft game, Rayman 3, can be used as an example. The game was released in 2003 in original language and later that year, company Playman did Full localization of the game with Czech text, voiceovers, et cetera. The manual that is added with the game contains twenty pages of content from the game. The content is following: Story, Controls, Installation of the Game, Characters, Staff Roll. The same can be found within packaging of games like Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time, Warrior Within, Two Thrones. Everything written in a single language. Another example is The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess. The manual in the box contains same information as well, only in English. Those games are prior to the beginning of year 2010.

The decrease of content of manuals can be found in newest games like Assassin's Creed: Odyssey where it contains information in four languages that were mentioned before. The information is only a simple game instruction. No story, no characters, almost nothing. The same can be found in game like The Legend of Zelda: The Breath of the Wild. Game like The Last of Us and Uncharted 4 from Naughty Dog for Playstation 4 does not contain even proper manual and only controls information.

The last example that will be shown here is Assassin's Creed: Revelations, where there is in 2012 a manual, but it contains less information and in two languages, Czech and Slovak. The information contained is following: Installation, Customer Support, et cetera.

Some games like Breath of the Wild contains the manual information in the system of the console but it is not the same as with a physical manual.

Not just Packaging, but Manuals as well fell in quality or rather the quality of information.

7 Research of Localization: Assassin's Creed Games

The second part of bachelor's thesis is aimed at research of individual video games, where the types of localization and its errors that occurs. The first two video games were chosen Assassin's Creed (2007) and Assassin's Creed: Odyssey which were developed by Ubisoft.

Assassin's Creed series belongs to franchises which are known all around the globe. It is for the most part for it's unique gameplay and story that takes place in different historical times. The series has been 'milked,' as the term is used for franchises that are released every year for a profit although, they use to be with same game mechanics, graphics and gameplay. What changes are the different stories to tell and different characters to experience. What usually changes, is the slight renewal of graphics and few gameplay mechanics that gives the game a new feel. But with these deficiencies the Assassin's Creed games are still topping the charts, winning rewards and are still popular.

In most of the games, the main protagonist is a member of a group of Assassins which is supposed to be a good side that stands against evil that is a Templar Order which tries to force humankind into submission and create so called "Eden." In most of the games, the story seems to be the same but takes place in different historical times. The first game was set in time of Third Crusade, in a Holy Land. The second installment then took place in Italy in Renaissance where players could meet a well-known historical character Leonardo da Vinci, plus other few real-life characters from that era. The third game was set in time of American Revolution with George Washington as a historical character that players could meet. And the list goes on. Nowadays, over ten games of the franchise were released, and the newest instalment is Assassin's Creed: Odyssey.

Odyssey takes place over thousands of years ago in an Ancient Greek World. It was set in time, where the legendary battle of Thermopylae took place with Leonidas of Sparta against King Xerxes of Persia. It was also known as The Battle of 300. The main storyline then continues few years later. The player can choose between two main characters. Male, Alexios and female, Kassandra and relive their stories and fates.

7.1 Assassin's Creed (2007)

The franchise has been released worldwide from the beginning of the first game. The first Assassin's Creed game was released in 2007. It came out for home consoles Microsoft Xbox 360 and Sony Playstation 3. The game became popular and computer owners got their chance to play the game in 2008, where Ubisoft decided to release a PC port.

But what is important about the first Assassins game? It was one of the few games which were given a full localization in the Czech Republic. What is more, the game got itself a voice-over of well-known Czech actors. Czech actors were following:

Tab.7.1.1.: List of Characters and their Czech Actors

| In-Game Characters | Czech Actors |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Altair(the main character)</i> | <i>Martin Stránský</i> |
| <i>Al Mualim</i> | <i>Zdeněk Hess</i> |
| <i>Desmond Miles</i> | <i>Petr Lněnička</i> |
| <i>Warren Vidic</i> | <i>Jaromír Meduna</i> |
| <i>Lucy</i> | <i>Illona Svobodová</i> |
| <i>Jubair Al Hakim</i> | <i>Jan Šťastný</i> |

The samples of each voice can be found on Youtube when writing in the search window: 'Postavy a jejich hlasy / Assassin's Creed (2008)'.

The Czech voiceover was done in a time, when the game was ported to computer. The translating team could already work on translation of the game, since it was already released on consoles. That gave the team time to translate and test the game, so it ended up being one of the best fully translated games in the Czech Republic.

The worst part about the release was that Assassin's Creed 1 was the only Assassins game that was fully translated. When the second game was released, it only received Partial Localization which included the translated subtitles, title menu and translation of Packaging and Manual. The same procedure was done with the newest releases till the last installment Odyssey.

7.2 Assassin's Creed: Odyssey

Assassin's Creed: Odyssey has been released in 2018 as a successor of Assassin's Creed: Origins which came out with new gameplay mechanics and Assassins entered the age of RPG. The game was released worldwide for Xbox One, Playstation 4, Nintendo Switch and PC. The game came with many language options including the Czech localization, the Partial Localization. Meanwhile many other languages got Full Localization, including audio. Language options in Odyssey:

Tab.7.2.1. Language Options in Assassin's Creed: Odyssey

| Language | Audio | Subtitles | Interface |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| <i>English</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>French</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Italian</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>German</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Arabic</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Czech</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Dutch</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Japanese</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Small table serves for showing few language options, including Czech language. Most of the languages came with subtitles, interface including voiceover. There are various reasons why Czech language did not get full localization.

First off, the Czech language is not as extensive as English and as it was mentioned in theoretical part before, the developers want to make a profit by selling their games worldwide. But since the Czech language is not as big as English, French, German, not just from the point of view of language but the country as well, then that causes an important decision: *Localize? Not Localize? How much to Localize?* English is known worldwide, therefore the full localization is a logical step. The same thing goes with French as well since it used not just in France, but in Canada as well. One of the examples can be Quebec where the main developers are situated. A city where French is used. Italy is a big country as well and Japan is a theme by itself. But why no full localization in the Czech Republic? The full localization as again mentioned in the first chapters is expensive because it contains not only translation but also voiceover. Paying for the studios and actors can cost someone's leg and if the income from

that country will not be enough, the expenses will not be paid properly. That is why it is said that the Partial Localization is a golden mean.

Also, the Czech voice dubbing is known for lower quality, except few exceptions as was the first Assassin's Creed game mentioned above.

8 Research of Localization: Kingdom Come: Deliverance

Kingdom Come: Deliverance started as the Kickstarter project and finally got its release in 2018. Even when it came out with many bugs that were fixed along the way, it became very popular for its unique RPG genre and story.

The story takes place in 1403 in Kingdom of Bohemia, after the death of Emperor Charles the Fourth, where it fell into dark times filled with wars and corruption. The son of Emperor Charles, Wenceslas was supposed to take his place, but was captured by his half-brother, Sigismund.

The main character is a son of a blacksmith but is then forced to leave his home after the attack on village Skalice. From there, he joins the resistance against King Sigismund alongside Lord Radzig Kobyla and his story begins.

What is interesting about Kingdom Come? It was developed by Czech company, WarHorse and then published by Deep Silver. But what is even more interesting is that the game has only Partial Localization. That means that the game was only released with Full localization in English, German and French. The reason is simply expenses. Since the game started only as the Kickstarter project, the financing was mostly done by the supporters and the developers. And as the game was supposed to be released worldwide and the small Czech market which sold only ten thousands of copies, the developers had to choose the easier way. (“čeština,”2014) Meaning that the whole game was done in languages that would profit the WarHorse the best.

Here is a list of the languages available in Kingdom Come: Deliverance

Tab 8.1. Language Options in Kingdom Come: Deliverance

| Languages | Audio | Subtitles | Interface |
|------------------|--------------|------------------|------------------|
| <i>Czech</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>English</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>German</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>French</i> | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Spanish</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Polish</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Russian</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Italian</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|
| <i>Simplified Chinese</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |
| <i>Turkish</i> | | ✓ | ✓ |

Therefore even the Czech companies can make games that are not Fully localized in Czech language. Sometimes, the original English dubbing is better than Czech dubbing, because Czech dubbing is not very well known for its great voiceovers.

8.1 Kingdom Come Characters

What many players might find interesting is the choices of names. More, the translation on most of them. The table will show the examples of names in Czech language and in English language.

Tab 8.1.1.: List of Characters in English and Czech

| Characters in English | Characters in Czech |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Henry</i> | <i>Jindřich</i> |
| <i>Radzig Kobyla</i> | <i>Racek Kobyla</i> |
| <i>Hans Capon</i> | <i>Jan Ptáček</i> |
| <i>King Wenceslas</i> | <i>Král Václav</i> |
| <i>Robard of Talmberg</i> | <i>Bořek z Talmbergu</i> |

8.2 No Literal Translations

Right from the start of the game, Czech and English speaker can realize that the spoken (English) and written (Czech) text is not the same. Not that the meaning is different but the way the sentences are put together makes it one of the best Partial localized games in the Czech Republic. Most of the translations tend to be close to literal translations with minor changes but Kingdom Come takes it to new heights and Deliverance might be great for learning and playing with English.

9 Research of Localization: Errors in Localizations

9.1 Assassin's Creed: Odyssey – Main Character Name Change

In every game can be found at least one error in localization. Either way it is because of shortage of time for the translation testing or because of so called 'Blind Translation.' But sometimes faults can be found even through perfect testing. This chapter will include only three errors that have been found while playing several games.

First error can be found in Czech localization of Assassin's Creed: Odyssey. As it was mentioned in earlier chapters, the localization of games is not as simple as translating books, movies. Because modern games became even more interactive, the script for the game can contain even more pages of text than movies or books. It can reach over thousands of pages of script. Sometimes there is possibility for the 'Blind Translation' where the translator works only with the text without true context that might be in the game. But the example in Assassin's Creed: Odyssey is different. Player can choose from two main characters Alexios and Kassandra. That alone can create more text and more possibilities in the Base Game Code. On the following picture, there is a gameplay from the game, where the player is supposed to save a certain character and after defeating the enemies, the certain character calls out to the main hero. But what happens can be overlooked by the player, but some may notice. The character calls the main hero, which is at the time played by Alexios, Kassandra. There may be few ways how to explain this error. Either the translator was in time pressure where this small error might have been overlooked, or error in the game code occurred or even the error was overlooked on purpose because there was no time left to fix it. All of this are just suggestions, but the answer will be somewhere between the lines.

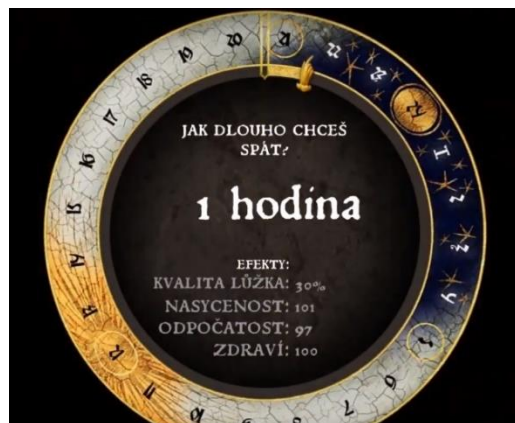


Pic 9.1.1. Kassandra instead of Alexios error

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A36o1IwvgIs&t=1993s>)

9.2 Kingdom Come: Deliverance - Time

As with many bugs as it came with, there was one error in localization which may not be a bug at all. The fault found in the Czech localization of Kingdom Come: Deliverance is in the time. The main character, Henry, to let the time pass can wait on one place for several hours. Either he can wait for certain time of day, or wait for night, or morning. With it comes problem that might be tricky to solve and does not have to be the fault of the translators or developers but the fault of the language itself. In English and many other languages, the time has in most occasions only two forms. For instance, English, Hour and Hours. German, Stunde and Stunden. Heure and Heures. But Czech has four forms: hodin, hodina, hodinu, hodiny. Since the game code could be programmed for only two forms of time, then the problem is within the language.



Pic. 9.2.1 One Hour Waiting in Kingdom Come: Deliverance
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taKbc8w9DEo&t=2261s>)



Pic 9.2.2 Two Hours Waiting in Kingdom Come: Deliverance
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taKbc8w9DEo&t=2261s>)



Pic 9.2.3: Nine Hours Waiting in Kingdom Come: Deliverance
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1Yuhz6tAkc&t=1034s>)

9.3 Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc –Missing Lines/Lip-Sync

Released in the beginning of 2003 in English language, later released in Full Localization in Czech language. The game was very successful and contained favorite character from Ubisoft to children and even adults. But the localization was not perfect. There were several missing lines that were not dubbed. One could be found at the beginning of the Fifth chapter, where Rayman rescues Teensies (little blue creatures reminiscent to monks) and they tell him that the only way is through tunnels. But the catch is that they are guarded by Knaarens. In the Czech version, only the line about tunnels was mentioned, but the rest was missing, meanwhile the creature was still talking. Either could be caused by time pressure or fault in the game code, which prevented the voice to be played with the character.

Other error that could be noticed is in the First Chapter of the game, where the main character defeats an enemy and acquires a power up. There could be found a slow Lip-Sync, where the character keeps talking but the voice follows few seconds later.

Conclusion

The aim of this Bachelor's thesis was to bring a closer theoretical and practical look at the Localization of Video Games.

The localization of video games is not the same as with localization of movies, books, et cetera. It is much harder and can be challenging for the developers. The need of localization is vital to the video game world and to the companies, because nowadays, almost every household around the world has at least one video game player who enjoys the fruits of modern technology. That includes both children and adults.

Localization serves as an expansion of a foreign company's video games into different countries and cultures. That way they can expand their income but also decrease the overall money they will get in return if the game is not popular. That depends on the type of localization the developer wants to use. There are methods from low risk to high risk, same as cheap and expensive. From No localization to Full localization, and from localization of Packaging and Manuals to Partial Localization.

It is also necessary to look out for cultural differences since every culture has different customs and different beliefs. What may seem funny to one side, might be offensive to the other.

Even if the game is brought with top notch localization, the localization itself could be undone if the problem would reveal to be in the language itself. See above in in Chapter 8.2. The localization is still in its evolution state and maybe one day, all games will be localized in every language with Full localizations. Only if the game market will one day reach new heights.

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